[illegible]

The planting and weeding periods vary according as the rains are early or late. Between these there is a time when the crops have to be watched, and also [illegible] a time when [illegible] to the crops [illegible] against animal depredations.

The Dorobo grow two main crops, [illegible] eleusine [illegible] commonly known in Kenya as [illegible], a short graminaceous plant bearing a head composed of small grains, and [illegible] maize. [illegible] had not been adopted by 1929 as a cultivated crop, and when wanted had to be bought from the Nandi. As a subsidiary crop, sweet potatoes, [illegible], are grown to a small extent.

Implements are confined to the hoe [illegible], axe [illegible], and [illegible] knife [illegible], though the use of the plough [illegible] is spreading. [illegible] made by Nandi smiths and [illegible] are got from the Nandi in exchange for [illegible], honey, or skins. The [illegible], though used by the Nandi, had not been adopted by the Dorobo in 1929.

The ground is prepared in the same way as by the Nandi. The top soil is dug with the hoe, collected into small heaps, and fired. It is left smouldering for several days and the burnt earth and vegetable ash are then spread over the plot and dug in with the hoe. Seed of maize and eleusine is bought from any Nandi who is willing to sell it, usually one of the numerous squatters on the nearby farms[*]. The Dorobo get two [illegible] in exchange for one [illegible]. Potatoes [illegible] are generally grown by themselves, but maize and eleusine are planted together in the same plot so that the eleusine grows up between the maize plants. Maize has thus to be sown wider than is really necessary, but it is a Nandi habit, and in favour of it one may say that the intervening spaces are partially covered and thus there is a chance of preventing some erosion in the early stage when the ground is clean, for when the crop is a few inches high, people have not to [illegible], a process required if the land gets very dirty.

Each shamba is surrounded by a fence made of thorns and bushes, with occasional posts to strengthen it where necessary, and trees or stumps are included in the fence when they come in suitable positions. Sometimes there is a gate formed of movable upright poles, like the gate of a Nandi cattle enclosure, but usually the line of fence is unbroken, and access is by way of a rough stile of logs laid across the thorns.

Eleusine is reaped in the Nandi fashion by cutting off the heads with a knife, the straw being left to be trampled down and eventually dug in — that is, if the shamba is to be planted again. Maize is picked by hand, but in 1929 it was largely eaten on the field as the cobs developed, so that by the time it was fully ripe there was not much left to reap. By 1930, however, some Dorobo at [illegible], noticing the European practice of stooking maize in rows before it is ripe, cut and stooked their own in the same way, though they did not understand why it was done by the Europeans, whose object is to get as much as possible of the crop out of the way so that ploughing can start at once without having to wait till the crop is ripe. But the Dorobo had, all the same, made a step forward, for a solid, compact stand is less likely to be devastated by animals than plants standing scattered over a field.

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[*] A Squatter is a "resident native labourer" living on a farm under contract with the employer.

By 20 November, 1938 the Kipsikis people had reaped their crops. The eleusine here was about an acre in extent, and was divided into four approximately equal-sized plots. There was little maize, for some had been eaten on the field and some had been destroyed by animals; what was left had been divided, and anything like an accurate estimate was impossible, though there might have been two or perhaps three bags in the acre. If we estimate that the equivalent of two bags might have been eaten, and two more destroyed by animals, we have about 6 or 7 bags, a somewhat high estimate for a crop grown mixed with eleusine, but not impossible.* Of eleusine, one plot yielded 3 bags, and another 2 bags (that is 5 bags from half an acre), not a great deal, certainly, but a fair yield under such conditions, and more useful in fact, for the Dorobo eat most of their eleusine, and turn very little of it into beer. Maize and eleusine are ground by crushing on slabs of granite (kirit), and the resulting meal is made into gruel (mosorek) for the children, and stiff porridge (kimnyet) for the older people; it is generally eaten with a stew of vegetable food (ingwek) prepared separately.

Storage of crops is not yet a very difficult problem. A few of the Dorobo, it is true, have built granaries of Nandi type, hidden just inside the forest to prevent thefts by the Nandi, for anyone can lift up the roof of such a granary in the night. But since so much of the maize is eaten on the field, what is left at harvest time can be stored in the hut; and the same applies to eleusine, for it does not yield a large amount of grain. I saw no millet growing, and the Dorobo said they bought it from the Nandi.

As we have already noted, agricultural labour is divided to a certain extent between the sexes, but the distinction is not very sharp, and it was found to work out in the following way:

Men:	Both:	Women:
Heavy preliminary work	Digging	
Planting	Weeding	Collecting and burning weeds
	Reaping	

The heavy work includes lopping off branches in the Nandi manner, clearing bushes, and breaking up the ground when hard. Women may also plant, but the tendency seems to be for men to do it, though there is no absolute rule against women planting. Children help with the weeding, and herd the goats when there are any; old men herd cattle, and women also sometimes herd goats.

The Dorobo had not by 1939 acquired the Nandi belief that each eleusine crop requires new land, which in the circumstances is just as well; but they do not hesitate to give up using land which is unproductive. Thus,

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* The bag is the standard 2 ¹/₂ lb. gunny bag used in East Africa, holding just the [illegible] maize.